Circular Letter No. 117

January 24, 1929

COOPERATIVE ENGLISH PLAN BETWEEN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE UNIVERSITY

(Themes and test)

GOVERNMENT OF PORTO RICO

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

SAN JUAN

ADDRESS ALL OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS TO THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION SAN JUAN, P. R.

January 24, 1929.

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Subject: COOPERATIVE ENGLISH PLAN BETWEEN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE UNIVERSITY (Themes and test)

TO Supervisors of Schools, High School Principals, and English Teachers of High Schools and Continuation Schools.

Attached hereto is copy of a plan for assisting the seniors of the high schools to be able to meet the standards of university freshman English and also the expected standard of every student who hopes to continue to progress with his study of English after he leaves school. The plan has been worked out jointly by the officials of the Department and of the University. Although the plan will involve in a specific way only the high school seniors, we are nevertheless sending every teacher of English a copy of the plan in order that she may be in a position to acquaint students with the plan, as the plan is of general interest to every student. Teachers of English other than the senior classes may do whatever they deem advisable in order to inform their classes of this work of the seniors.

Attention: Teachers of English IV and V

The test to be given to the seniors in accord with the attached plan (Section III) is the Diagnostic English Test I, Part A and B, published by the Department, and described in Circular Letter No. 110. The Department already had plans made for printing and using this test in all the high school classes previous to working out the cooperative English plan with the University; and, as the form of the test proved to meet the requirements of the cooperative English plan, it was agreed upon to use it for that purpose in the senior classes. Read Circular Letter No. 110 and give the tests in accordance with the plan outlined therein; then mail the tests uncorrected to the Department. Place the papers of each class in a separate group and label them accordingly. These tests are to be mailed to the Department with the themes discussed in the follow-

ing paragraph.

Section III of the cooperative English plan also calls for two themes to be written by the seniors, one theme in class and one at home. Request the students to bring to class on February 8 the theme written at home; on that same day have the students write in class the second theme and hand in the two clipped together. Observe the following rules:

1. The theme written at home and the one written in class shall be labelled below the student's name, respectively "Home Work", "Class Work."

2. On each theme there must be written
   a) the name of the teacher,
   b) the name of the school,
   c) the name of the student.

3. Themes are not to be folded.

4. Only one side of the paper is to be written on. Ink is to be used.

5. Place the papers of each class in a separate group and so label them.

6. Send the themes and tests in the same package.

Send the package of themes and tests to the Department not later than February 13, Wednesday.

Your earnest cooperation is requested in carrying out this plan which is sure to result in much good toward the solution of a problem that has confronted all secondary schools every where. Further information concerning the program of activities called for by the plan will be sent you later.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) JUAN B. HUYKE,
Commissioner of Education.

VD/af.
Encl.

ASSISTING HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS TO PREPARE FOR FRESHMAN ENGLISH AT THE UNIVERSITY

The concept of the high school as strictly a college preparatory school has passed away; the high school prepares students for various phases of life, and that of becoming a college student is but one of these phases. Although preparation for college has ceased to be the one objective of the high school, it nevertheless remains with us as one of the total of objectives and as such merits and receives earnest attention.

The large number of failures in freshman English at college has attracted the attention of all who are interested in either high school or college work. In various cases it has been found that these failures are caused by

1) the emphasis in high school senior English being on literature and the emphasis in the college freshman course being on composition,

2) a lack of understanding between high school teachers and college teachers as to the objectives and methods of each other, and

3) conditions arising from many high school seniors' not comprehending the requirements that will be made of them as freshman in college and therefore not putting forth their best efforts to profit by their senior English high school course.

The purpose of the attached plan is to supply the high school seniors certain information and assistance that will make it easier for them to meet the requirements of University freshman English and to assist the teachers in preparing the students for that work. In no wise is it the intent of the attached plan to impose upon high school seniors University standards or to force upon the high schools greater work than they can accomplish. The plan is purely a cooperative one designed for the benefit of both those students who will go to the University and for the benefit of those who will not go the University or to any institution of higher learning.

Plan
for

1) Giving High School Seniors Information on Requirements of Freshman English at the University of Porto Rico, and

2) Assisting Them to Make Special Preparation to Meet Requirements in Mechanics of English Composition of the Freshman Course

I. Representative themes from freshman English at the University.

1) Mr. Walbridge, Head of the English Department of the University, shall select and give to Miss Dilworth, Assistant General Superintendent of the Department of Education, a few representative freshman English themes with a distribution of grades from the lowest to the highest marks.

2) These themes shall be mimeographed and a few copies sent to each high school teacher of senior English so that he may show them to his students, thereby giving the students a concrete idea of the standards of freshman English at the University. Miss Dilworth shall make arrangements for distributing these themes thruout the schools.

II. Minimum essentials of composition, "capital crimes", and "spelling demons."

1) Mr. Walbridge shall prepare a statement of the rules which are considered most essential for freshman composition work, a set of the "capital crimes" of composition, a list of "spelling demons," and a statement of any other information which he may consider advisable to add in regard to the mechanics of composition.

2) These statements and lists shall be mimeographed and copies sent with the above-mentioned themes to all teachers of high school senior English.

III. All high school seniors to write in January a test and themes to be graded at the University for the purpose of giving the students estimates on their work on basis of standards of freshman English at the University.

1) The test shall be prepared on the statement of minimum essentials prepared by Mr. Walbridge and shall be given to all high school seniors.

2) Two themes from all high school seniors, one written at home and the other written in class, together with the above-mentioned test shall be given to Mr. Walbridge for correction.

Letters or figures shall not be used for grading these papers, but instead there shall be used explanatory phrases.

Miss Dilworth shall make arrangements for giving the test and collecting the themes and returning them to the students together with the letters mentioned below.

3) Mr. Walbridge and Miss Dilworth shall confer on the information revealed by the test and themes and shall direct to the students letters giving reports on their work.

4) The reports given in these letters shall give the students an estimate on their work, this estimate to be based on the standards of University freshman English. This estimate is to let them know if they are doing work of a quality which would justify its being said that they would probably be able to do satisfactory work in freshman college English or to point out to them the phases of their work on which they must concentrate their efforts in order to bring their work up to a satisfactory standard by September.

Of course, it is to be borne in mind that the students are only high school seniors and not college freshmen, but the necessity of pointing out to them the elements required in freshman English at the University is to make it possible for them to concentrate on the elements required and not to waste time by attempting to do more than is required. Obviously, these reports will largely coincide with what the teachers are having the students do, but the advantage of the reports are that they will simplify and clarify all work by reducing to a minimum the requirements for college entrance. The reports will be of assistance to the teachers by enabling them to concentrate their efforts on essentials, thereby being relieved of the necessity of covering a very extensive field, an effort that they must inevitably put forth unless given the information that will be derived from this cooperative undertaking.

5) The letters to the students shall be sent to the teachers for distribution to the students. The test and themes shall be returned with the letters.

IV. Remedial work.

1) Remedial work prepared to correct the errors revealed by the test and themes shall be given to the students.

2) This remedial work shall be planned by Mr. Walbridge, Miss Dilworth, and a committee of teachers, and shall be sent by Miss Dilworth to the teachers thruout the Island.

3) This remedial work conducted in class shall be of a sort beneficial to the entire class whether they are candidates for college or not. In case it is desired to give special work to those students who are going to college, this work shall be conducted as supplementary home-work.

V. Final test and themes in May.

1) In May a final test and two themes, one written at home and the other in class, from all high school seniors shall be sent to Mr. Walbridge for correction. Miss Dilworth shall make arrangements in the high schools for giving and collecting these tests and themes.

2) Mr. Walbridge and Miss Dilworth shall confer on the information revealed by the test and themes and shall direct to the students letters containing reports; these reports shall let the students know if their work in now of a character expected of one applying for admission to college, or recommend to them remedial exercises for study during the summer in case they expect to apply for admission in September. Naturally, college standards are higher than high school standards.

3) The same system for distributing the letters shall be used in May as in January.

This plan has been worked out jointly by Mr. Walbridge and Miss Dilworth and is offered as a method for meeting the need of coordinating the English courses in high school and in the University. The plan will be mutually beneficial. If the purpose and nature of the plan is fully explained to all

the teachers concerned, their cooperation will be gladly given. To all high school teachers of English a letter should be sent fully describing the plan and asking them in presenting the matter to the students to make it clear that the plan proposes not to make fruitless criticism of the present work being done by the students but to offer to the students information of a valuable sort in regard to their future work in English, whether as college students or not, and to give them means of checking up their work with higher standards.

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